

ROGER SALICK • TIM VIGIL • DENIS RODIER

BADGER

featuring
A NEW BADGER
short story by
MIKE BARON

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TWIGL89

BADGER™

CREATED BY MIKE BARON

A self-styled crime fighter who rides the highways and by-ways of America, the **Badger** metes out bloody justice to jaywalkers, ticket scalpers, indifferent teenaged fast-food clerks, in fact, *any-damn-body he feels like because he's CRAZY!*

Badger is just one side of **Norbert Sykes**, a Vietnam veteran with a personality problem: It's split seven ways. Nevertheless, Norbert almost always finds himself in a Badger state of mind.

Badger is a master of Shorin-ryu and dozens of other obscure, esoteric, arcane, not to mention abstruse martial arts. He can also talk to the animals — just like Dr. Doolittle. Only with better results.

Badger lives with **Ham the Weather Wizard** in a castle south of Barneveld, Wisconsin. Ham and Badger met while both were inmates at a state mental hospital. Through cunning and chicanery, Ham has amassed a considerable fortune.

Badger calls everyone Larry.

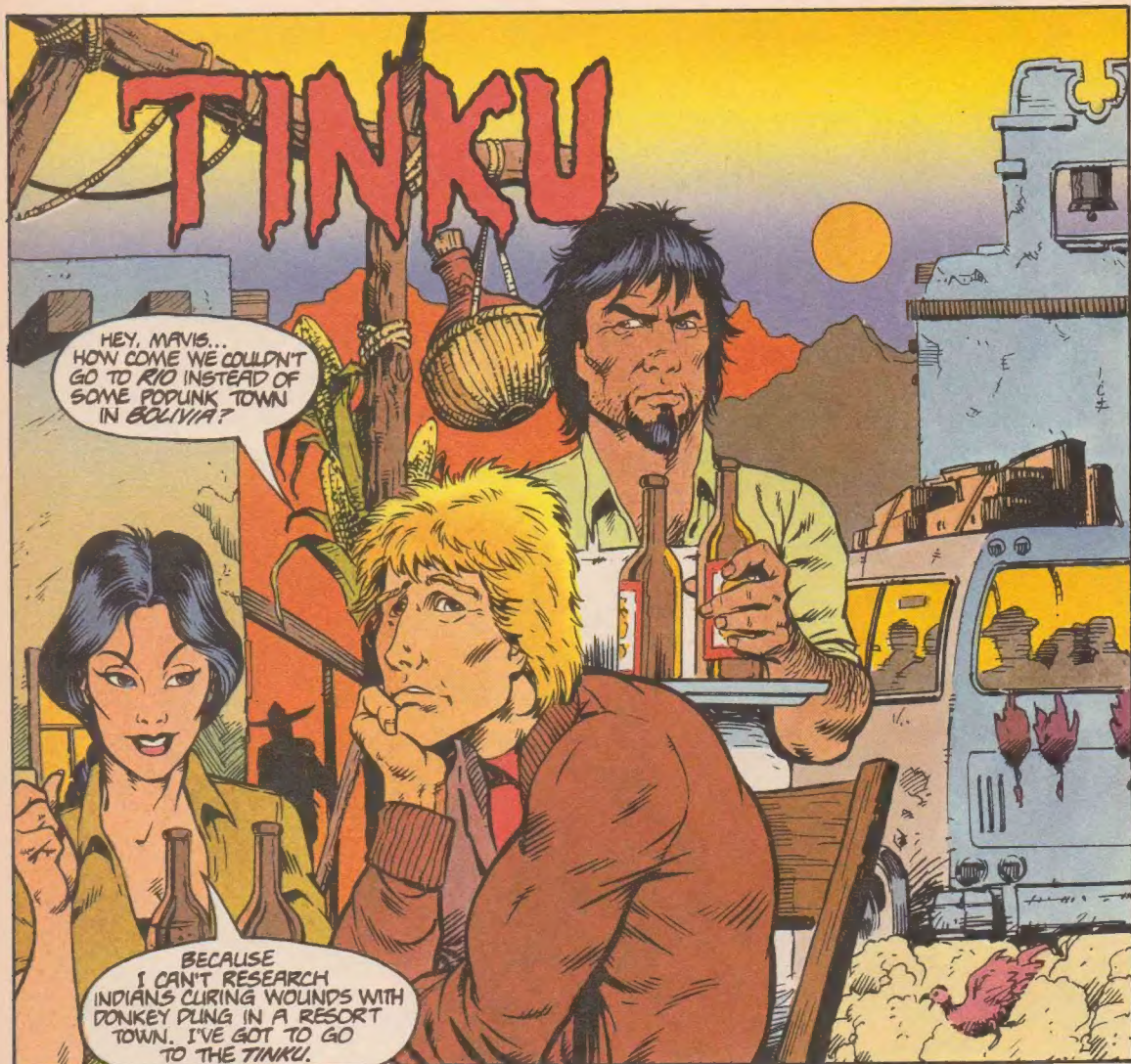
Last Issue: **Badger** saved kick-boxing champ **Master of Disaster** from the pits of hell by defeating a nine-foot tall purple demon named **Nick**.

In **Badger Goes Berserk #2: Badger** escapes from **Larry** and the **All-White Brotherhood**, and begins a descent to the roots of his madness, reliving his traumatic childhood. A special jam issue.

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roger
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tim
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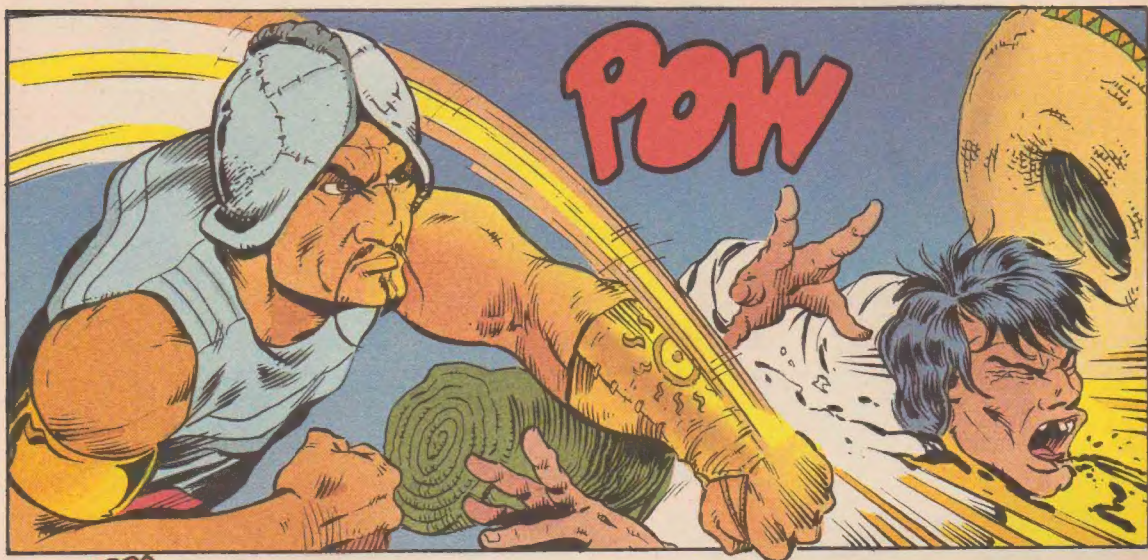
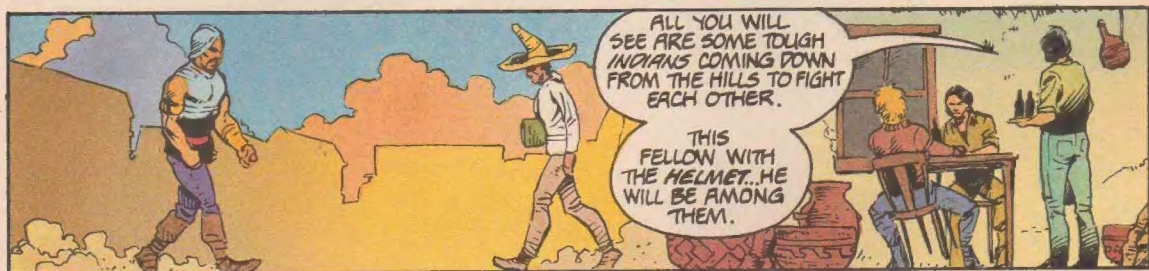
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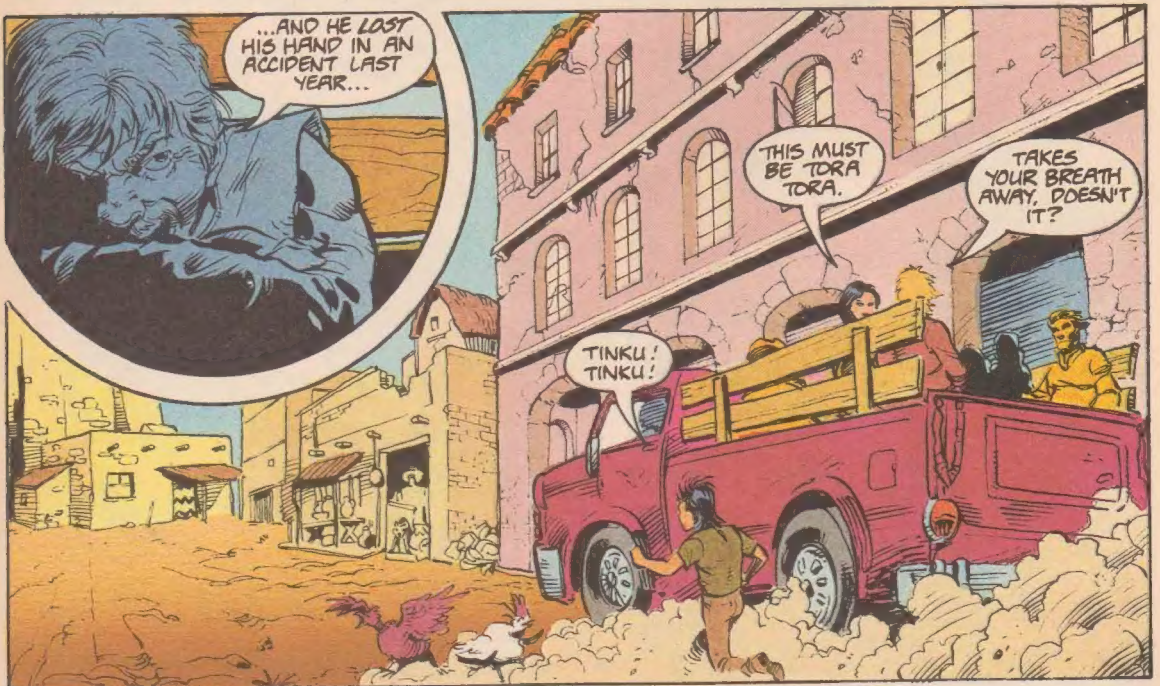
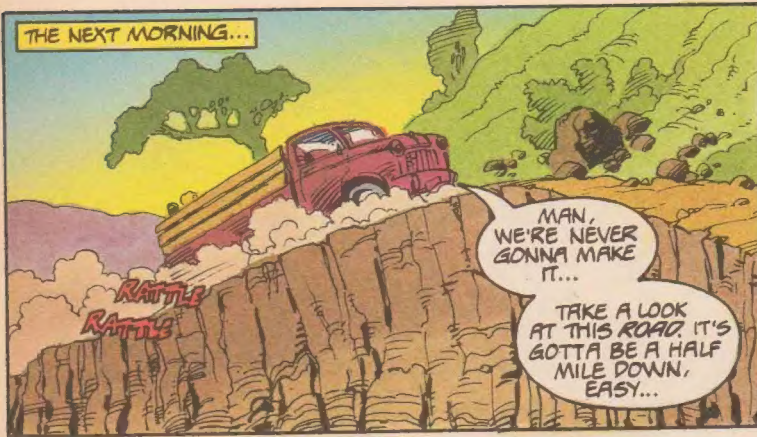
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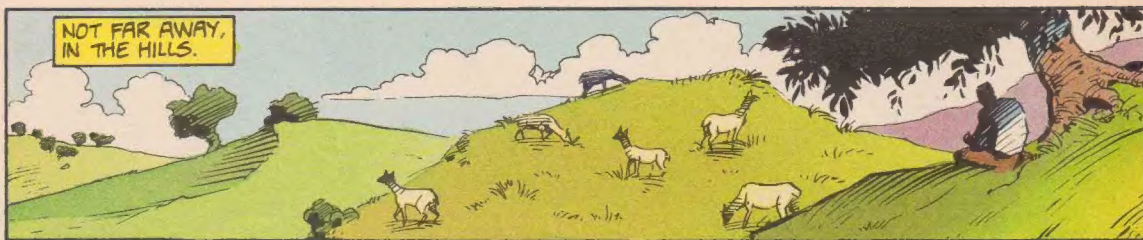
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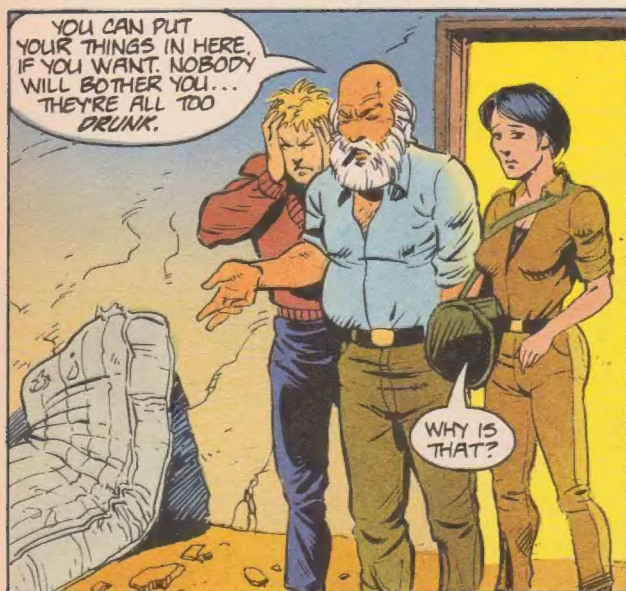
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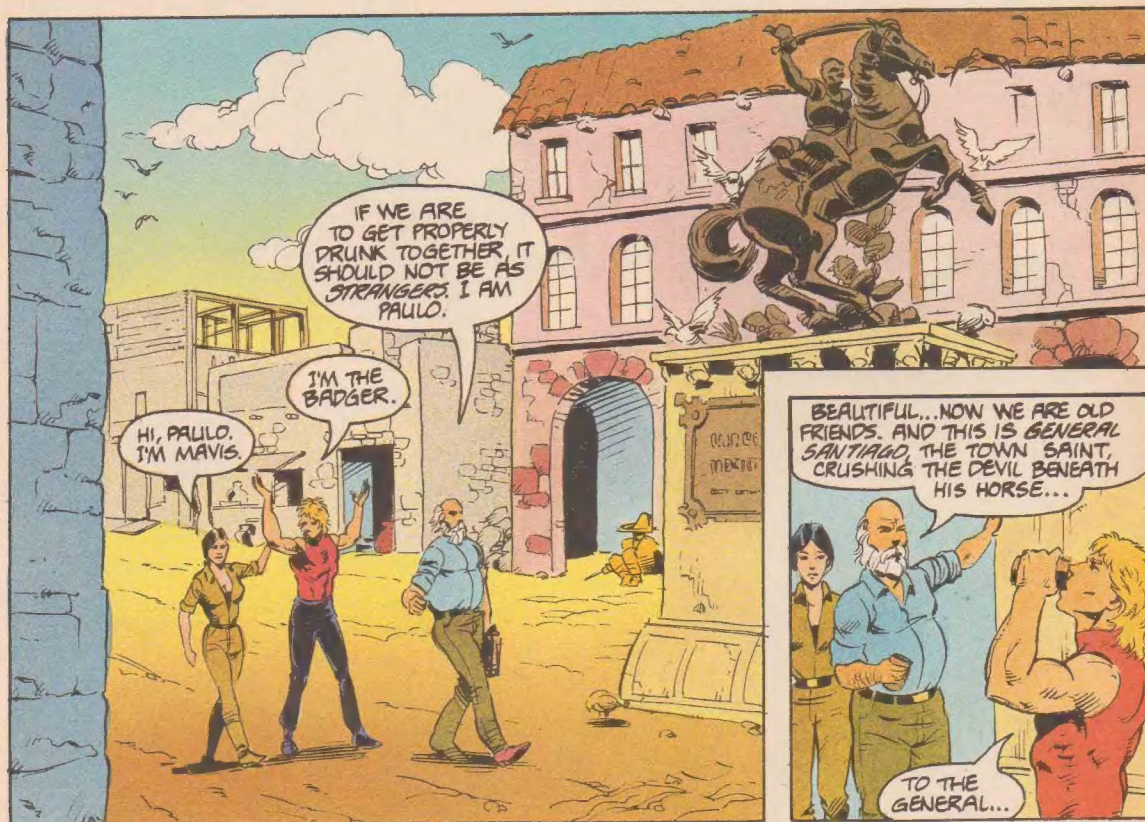
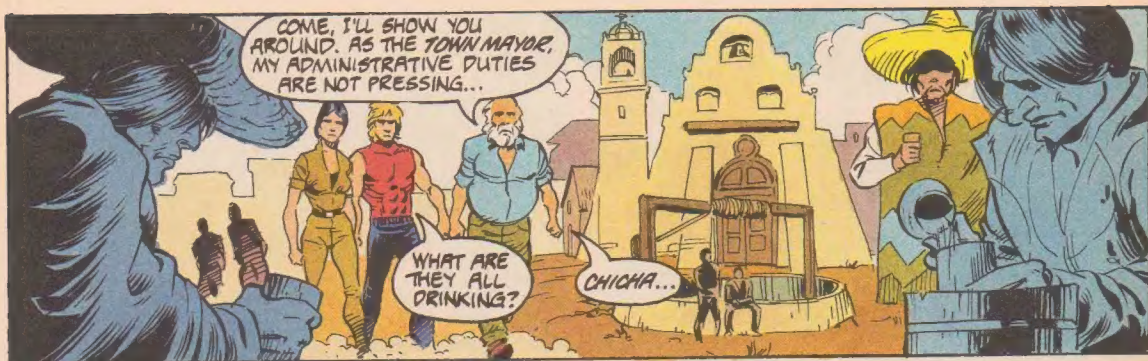
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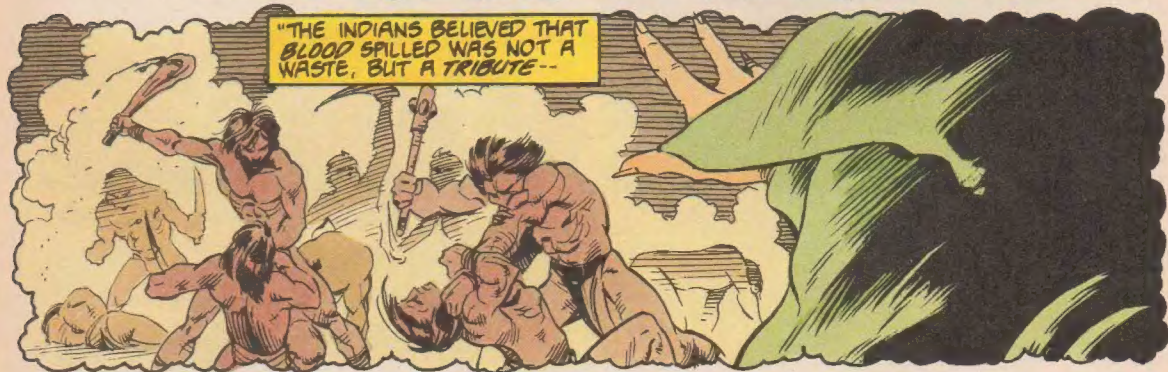
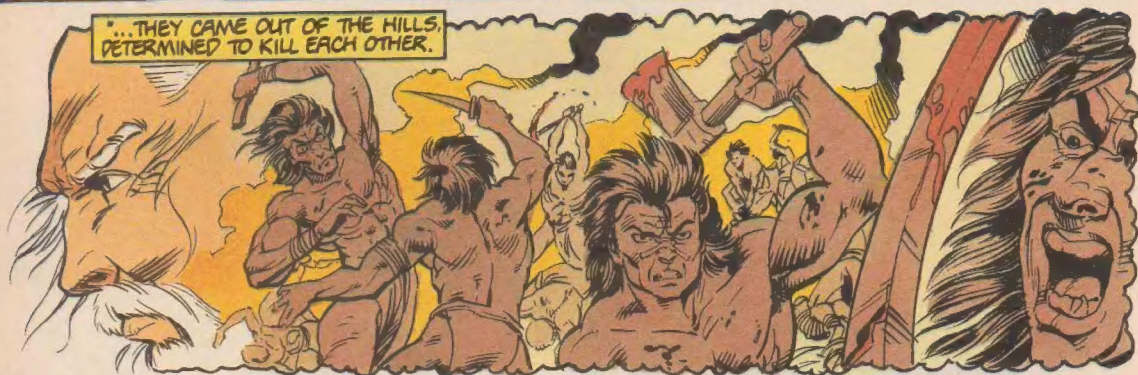




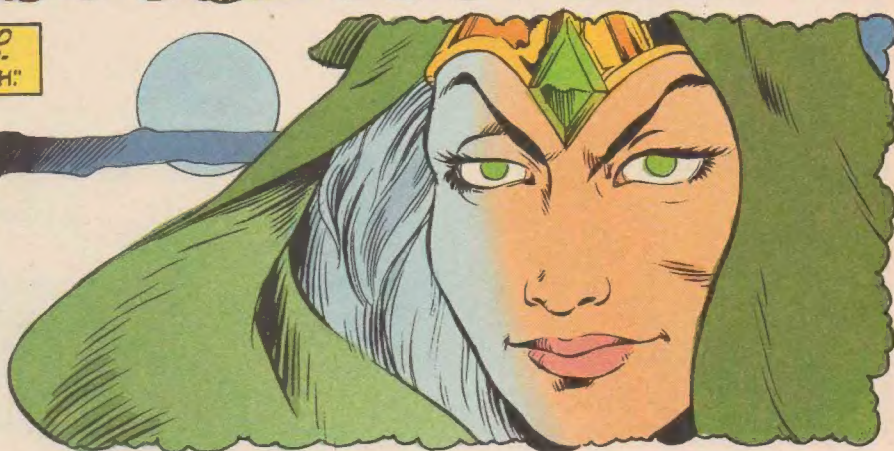


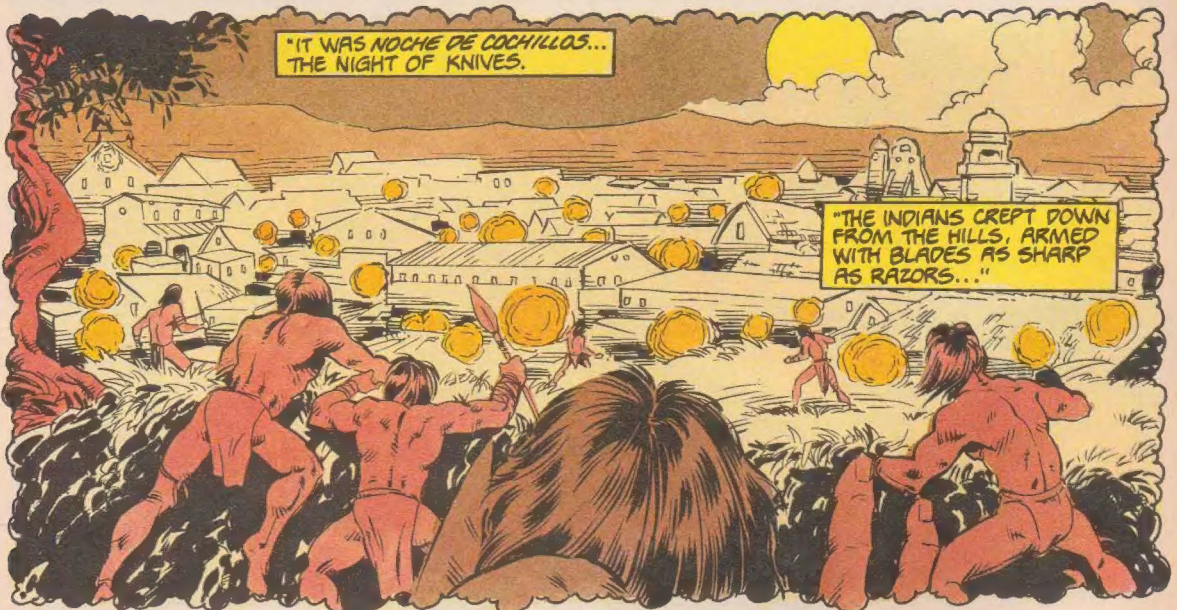


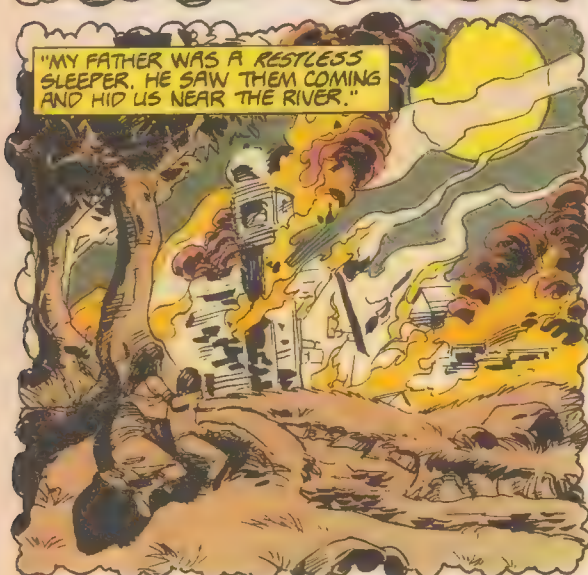


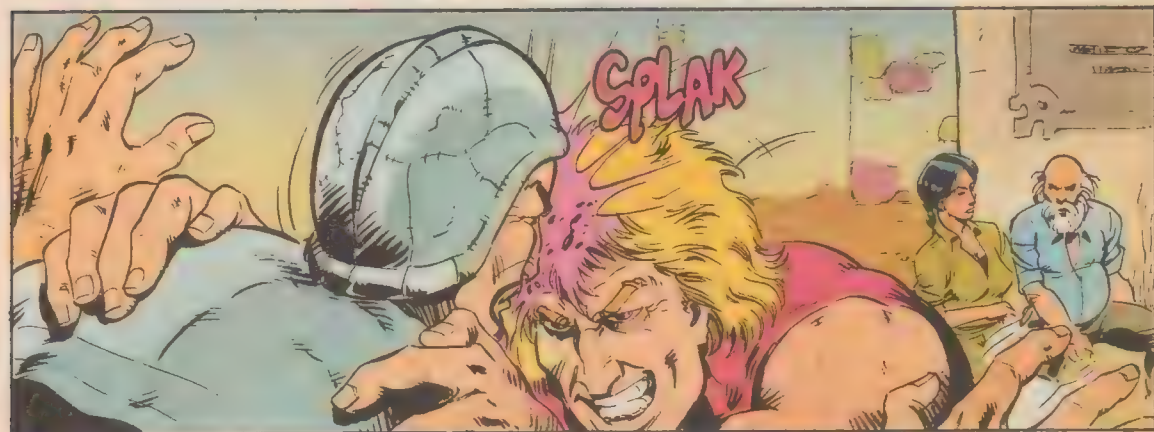
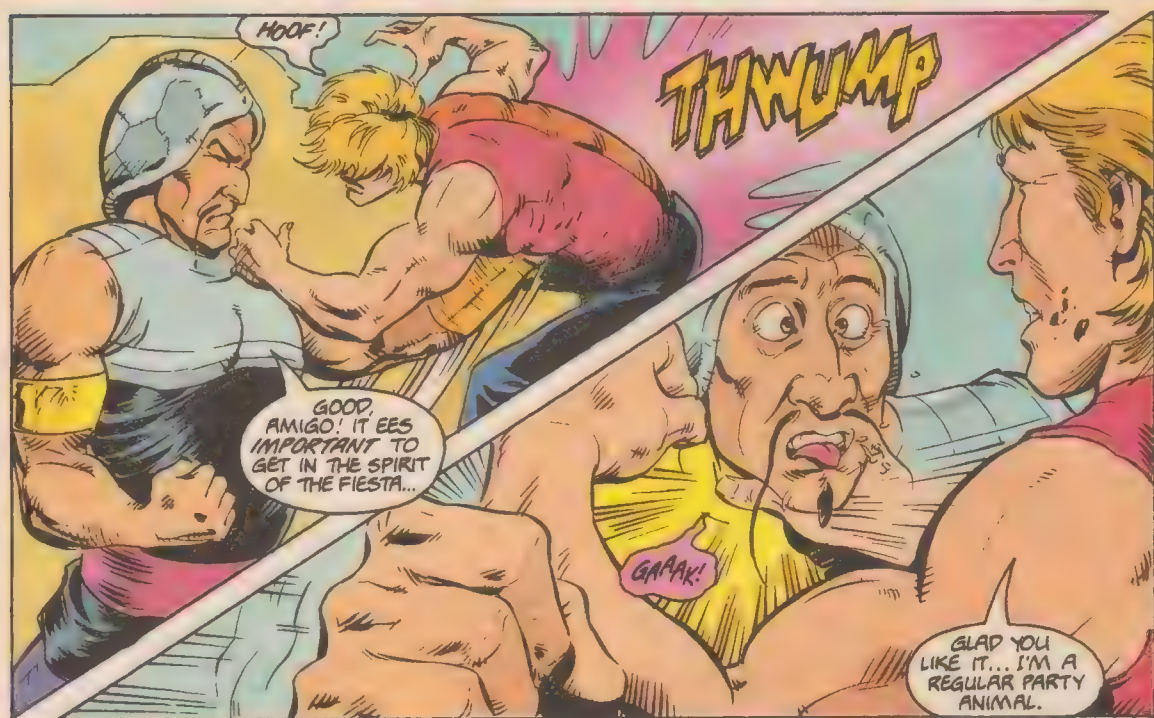


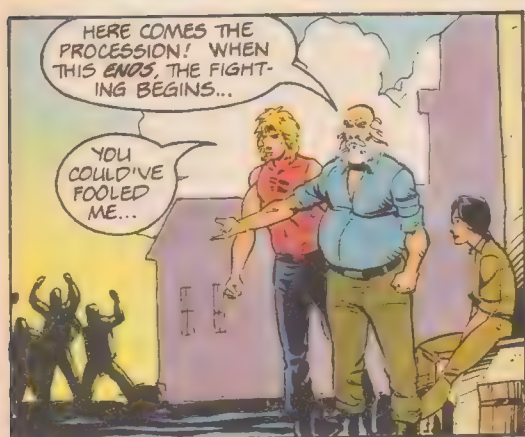
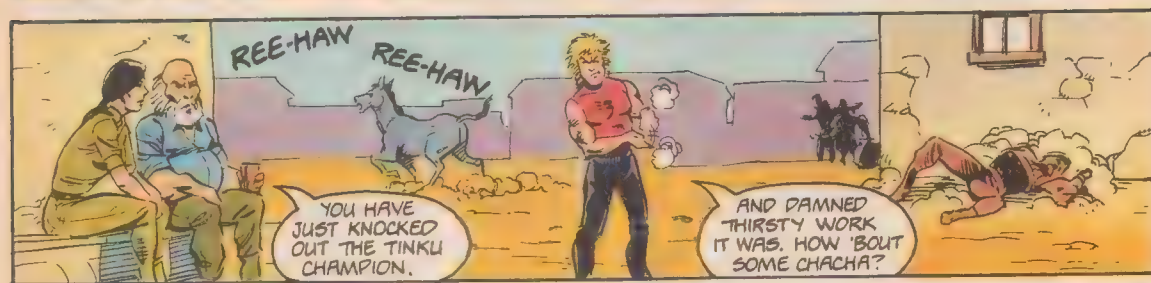
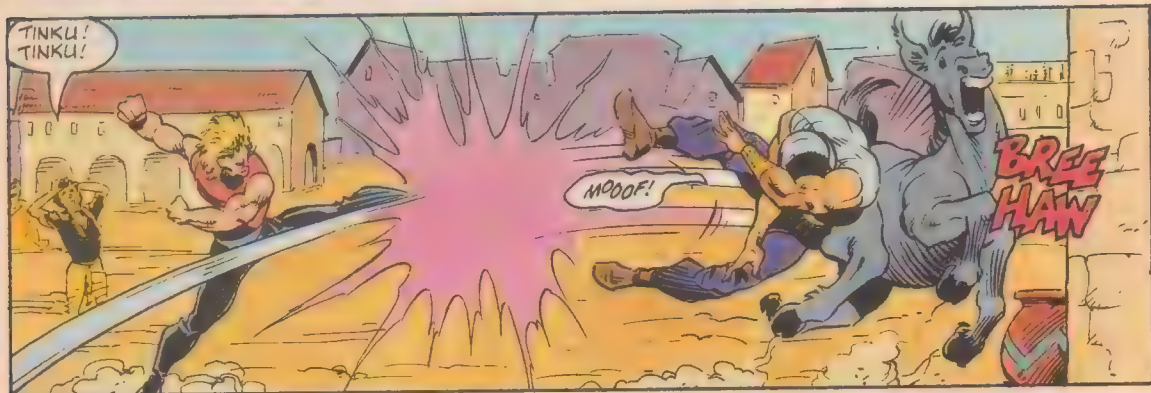
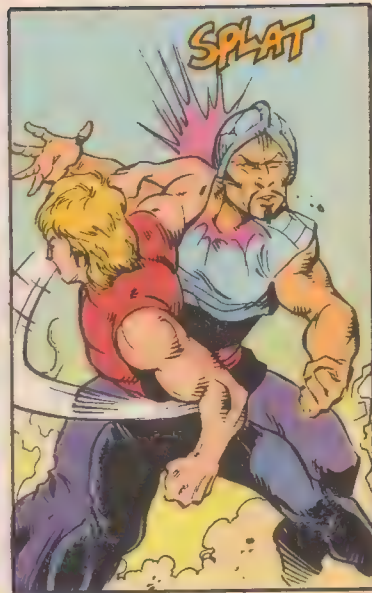
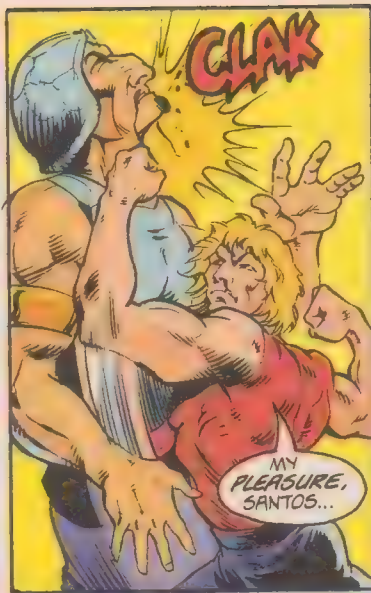
"--AN OFFERING TO PACHAMAMA, GODDESS OF THE EARTH."













Once upon a time...

You may have noticed that a lot of the people you run into nowadays, are not happy campers. And I guess it's understandable, what with mortgages, AK-47s, holes in the ozone layer, oil spills, and cars trying to run you down while doing rolling right turns on red. Yes, in-deed-ie, it's raining outside

Catherine each exist in two very different worlds: One in the sunlit "above" filled with violence and decay, the other in a twilight "below" of peace and subterranean wonders. It is impossible that two people from such irreconcilable backgrounds should have fallen in love — but they have.

The CBS television show renewed my faith that, within the format of an action/adventure series, a *love* story could be told. Not the "will they? won't they?" of some other shows I could name, but a romance. And Wendy Pini has boosted that conviction by a factor of ten. Not only does her story, *Portrait of Love*, have more than its fair share of suspense and action, not only are her full-painted pages exquisite, but she chronicles a chapter in the lives of two people who care for each other, and their worlds, very deeply.

I have a horror of gushing hype, but at the risk of being accused of just that, I have to say that *Beauty and the Beast: Portrait of Love* is a beautiful book. Wendy has succeeded

At the risk of being accused of gushing hype, 'Beauty and the Beast: Portrait of Love' is a beautiful book."

and the tent leaks.

So you'd kind of think with all RV camper loads of craziness we haul around each day, we'd opt to gentle our minds from time to time. To remember that every so often honesty is rewarded and evil exposed, that the seasons continue to turn, that love wasn't invented by Hollywood.

Har-rumphh! Bah humbug.

"Fantasies!" I hear you say. "Pure escapism. It's a hard world out there and there's no place for those who can't face that."

Just the facts, ma'am.

Right.

Well, whatever you may have been lead to believe, fantasy is not an escape from, it's an escape *to*. It reminds us that beauty and love and courage still exist. That the things we value most in our world, and in ourselves, can be retrieved. No, fantasy is *not* dead, regardless of what you may have heard, and I've got proof — *Vincent and Catherine*.

Beauty and the Beast has brought fantasy — and romance — back into vogue. Vincent and

brilliantly in translating the sound and movement of film into prose and paints. And I'm not the only one who thinks so. **Ron Koslow**, creator of the series, was very impressed when he saw Wendy's pencils at the start of the project. Now, having seen the final painted pages, he's floored. So much so, he contributed an afterword.

So, here's the scoop: *Beauty and the Beast: Portrait of Love*, written and illustrated by Wendy Pini, cover painting by **Olivia De Berardinis**, afterword by series creator **Ron Koslow**. 56 pages, full color, perfect bound, embossed cover. Out now.

Share the fantasy.

FIRST IN JUNE

1 Beauty and the Beast: Portrait of Love. All the action, romance, and adventure of the hit TV series is brought to comics. Written and illustrated by **Wendy Pini** with a new cover painting by **Olivia DeBerardinis**. Afterword by series creator **Ron Koslow**.

1 Badger Goes Berserk #2: Badger's stepfather, Larry, inducts a familiar, but reluctant, recruit. By **Mike Baron**, **Denys Cowan**, **Spyder**, **Jay Gaidhof**, **Malcolm Jones III**, **Denis Kitchen**, and **Jill Thompson**. Cover by **Paul Chadwick**.

1 Badger #52: Badger and Mavis tackle a South American goddess. By **Roger Salick**, **Tim Vigil** and **Denis Rodier**.

1 Sensei #2: Tadashi's presence in both the past and future brings terrible disturbances in the time stream. **First Fiction**, **Premier Format**. By **Roger Salick**, **Val Mayerick**, **Bob Dvorak**, **Eric Vincent**, and **Gerald Forton**.

1 Nexus #61: The Scorporation turns the tables on Stan. By **Mike Baron** and guest artist **Greg Guler**.

1 Dreadstar #47: Lord Palafox will have his first ally — if Oedi can survive the duel. By **Peter David**, **Angel Medina**, and **Bob Dvorak**. Plus **Pawne** by **Jim Starlin** and **Daina Graziunas**.

1 Whisper #29: Diane thinks she can get her life back together, but someone has other plans. By **Steven Grant** and new artist **Steve Epting**.

1 Grimjack #63: Someone's set Jim Twilley up: the verdict is guilty and the sentence is *death!* By **John Ostrander** and **Flint Henry**.

1 Sable #20: One of Sable's friends is in big trouble — only Grey doesn't know it. By **Mary Wolfman**, **Dave Hoover**, and **Richard Rockwell**.

1 Lone Wolf & Cub #26: By **Kazuo Koike** and **Goseki Kojima**. Cover by **Matt Wagner**.

1 Nexus Legends #6: By **Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude**.

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"We're gonna take Badger back to the roots of his madness!"
—MIKE BARON

BADGER GOES BERSERK!

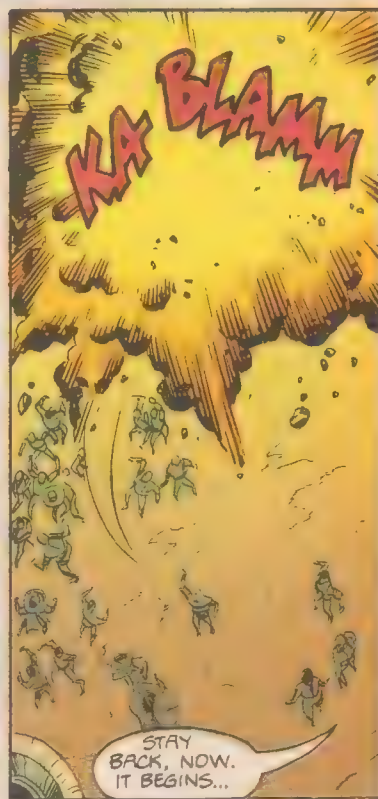
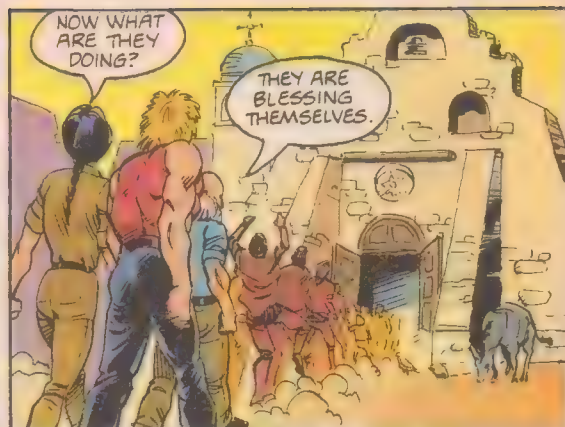
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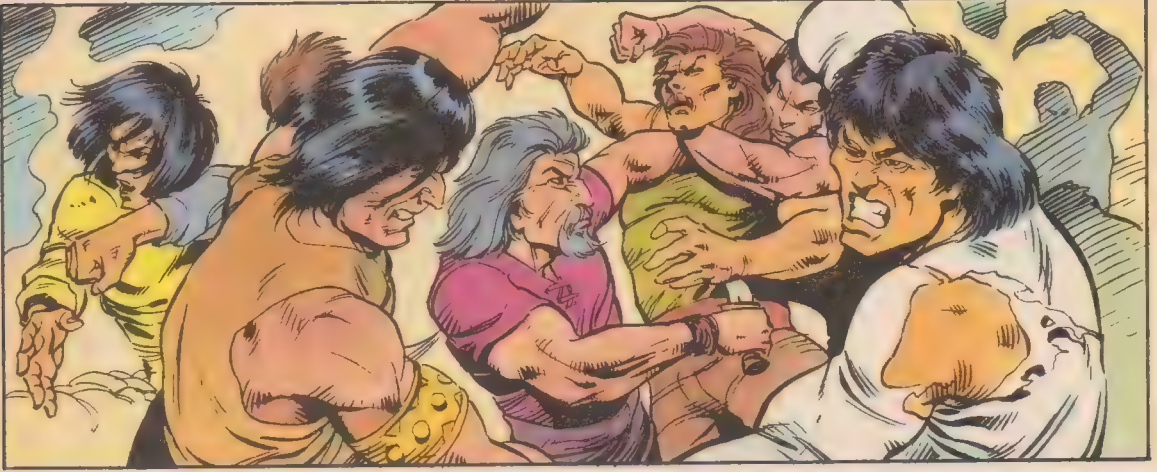
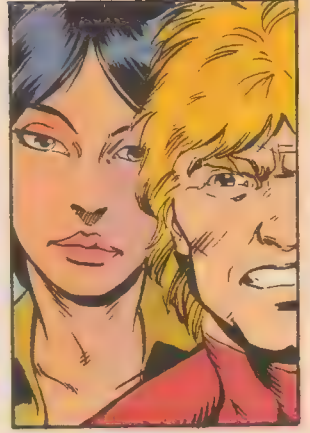
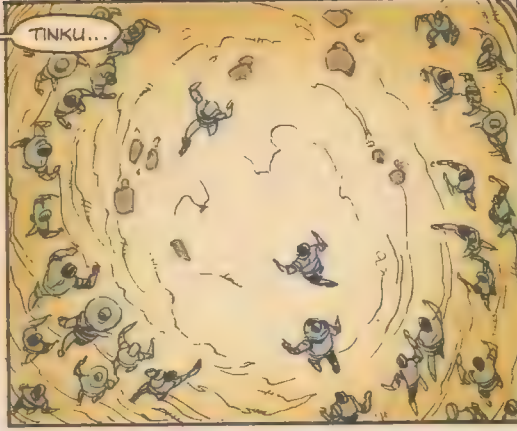
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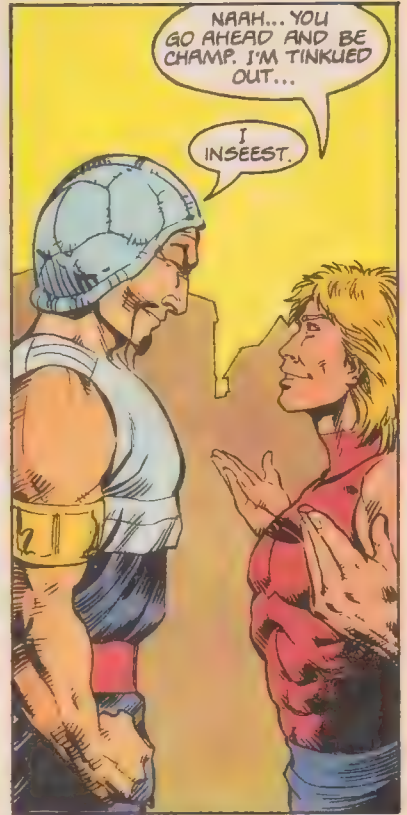
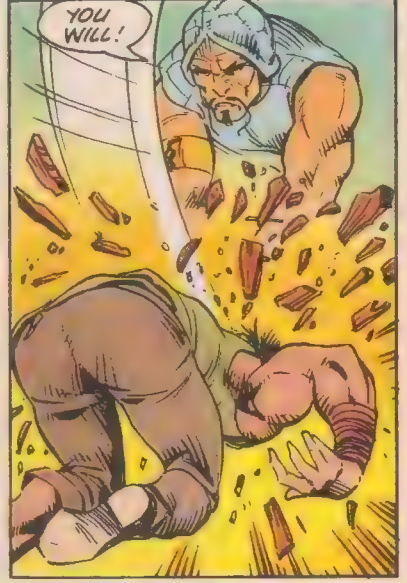
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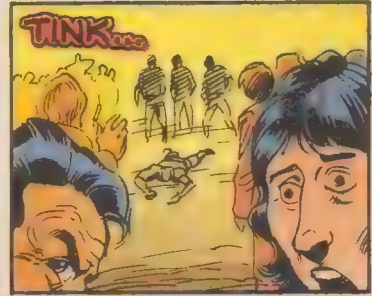
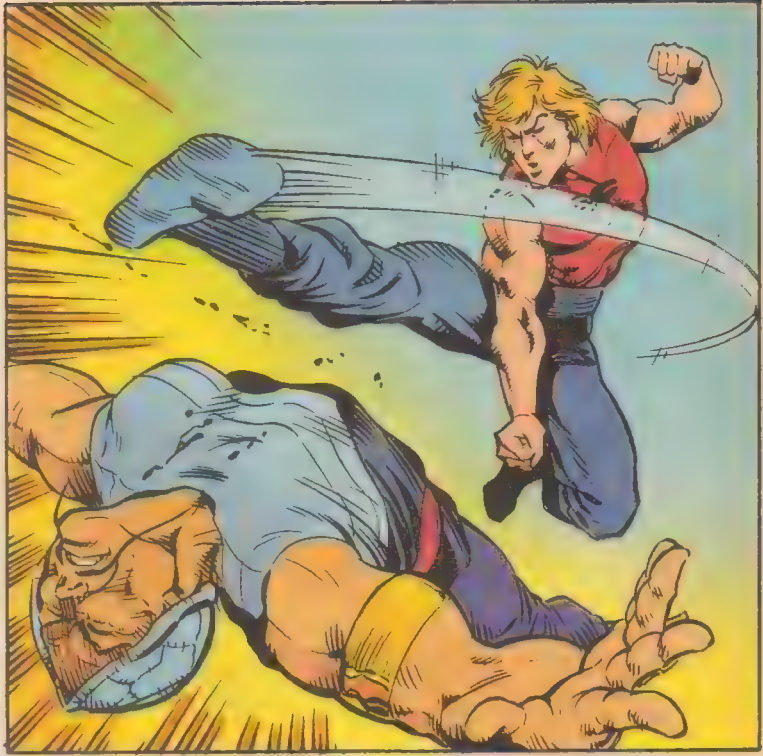
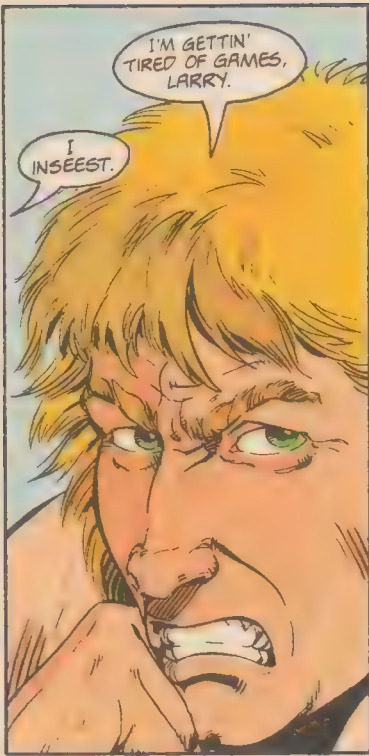
THE MADNESS CONTINUES IN JULY

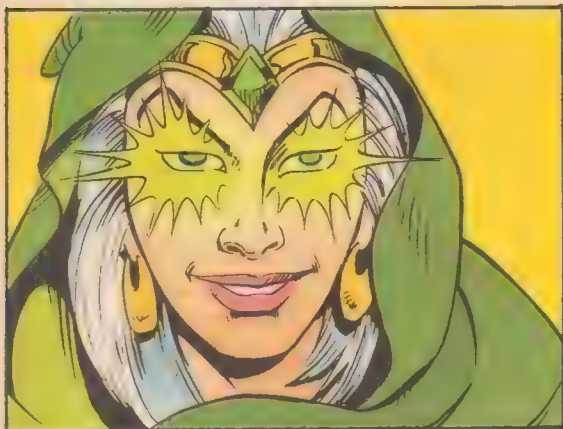
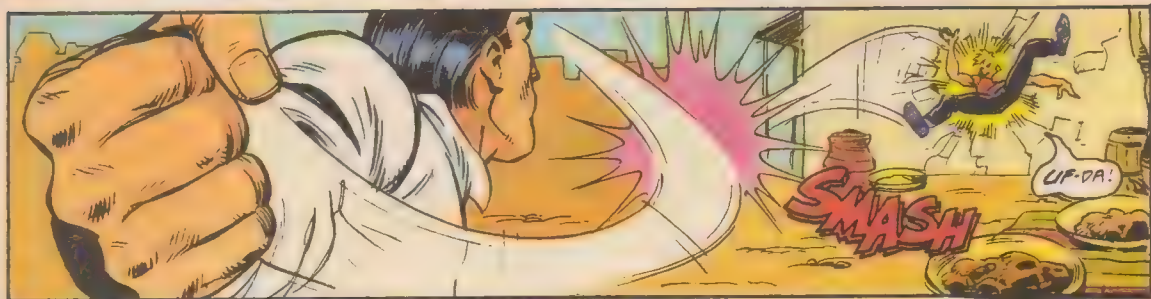
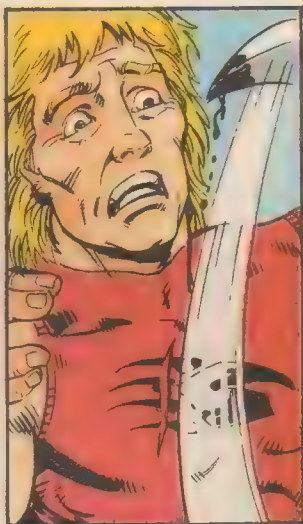




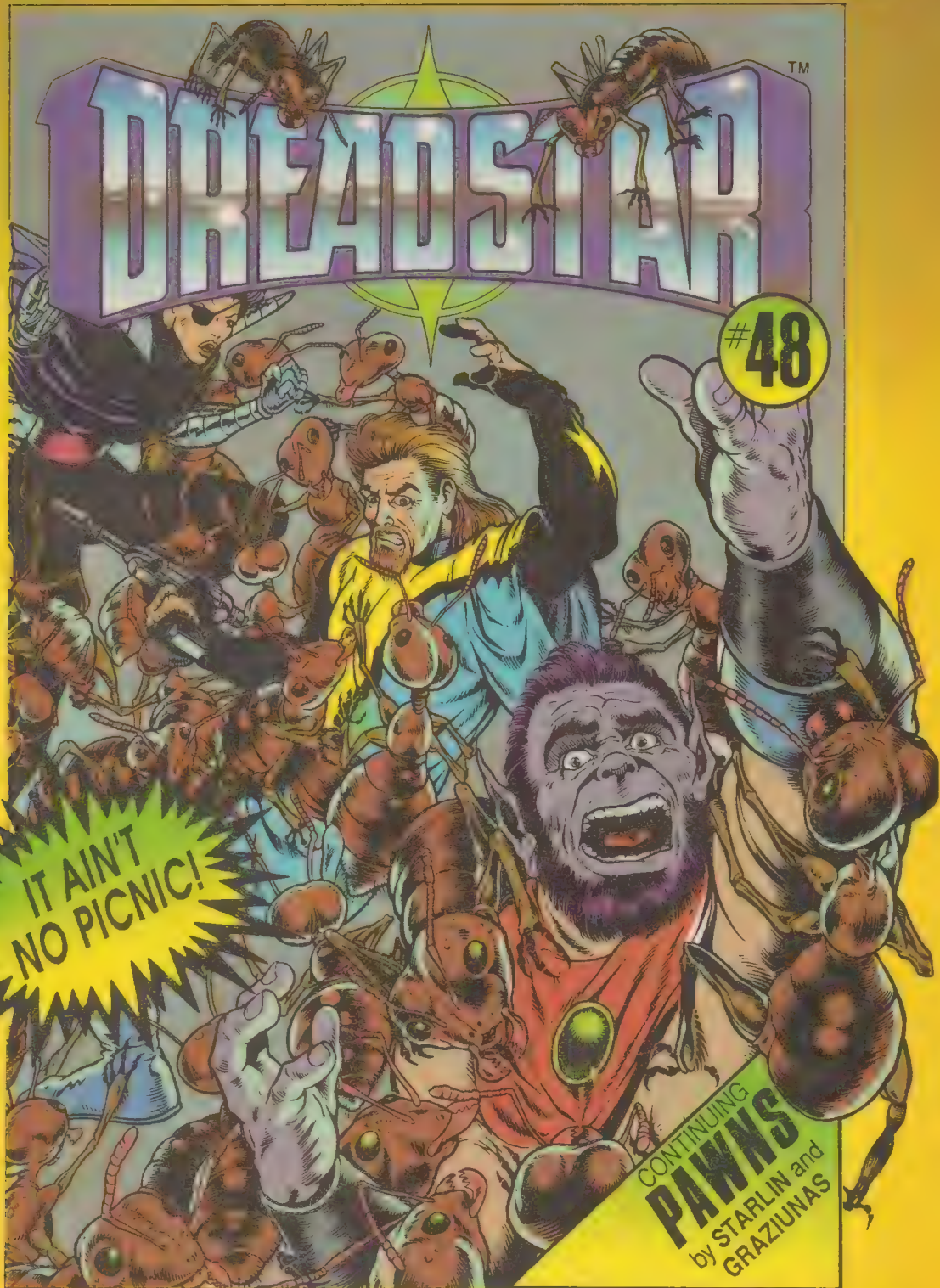






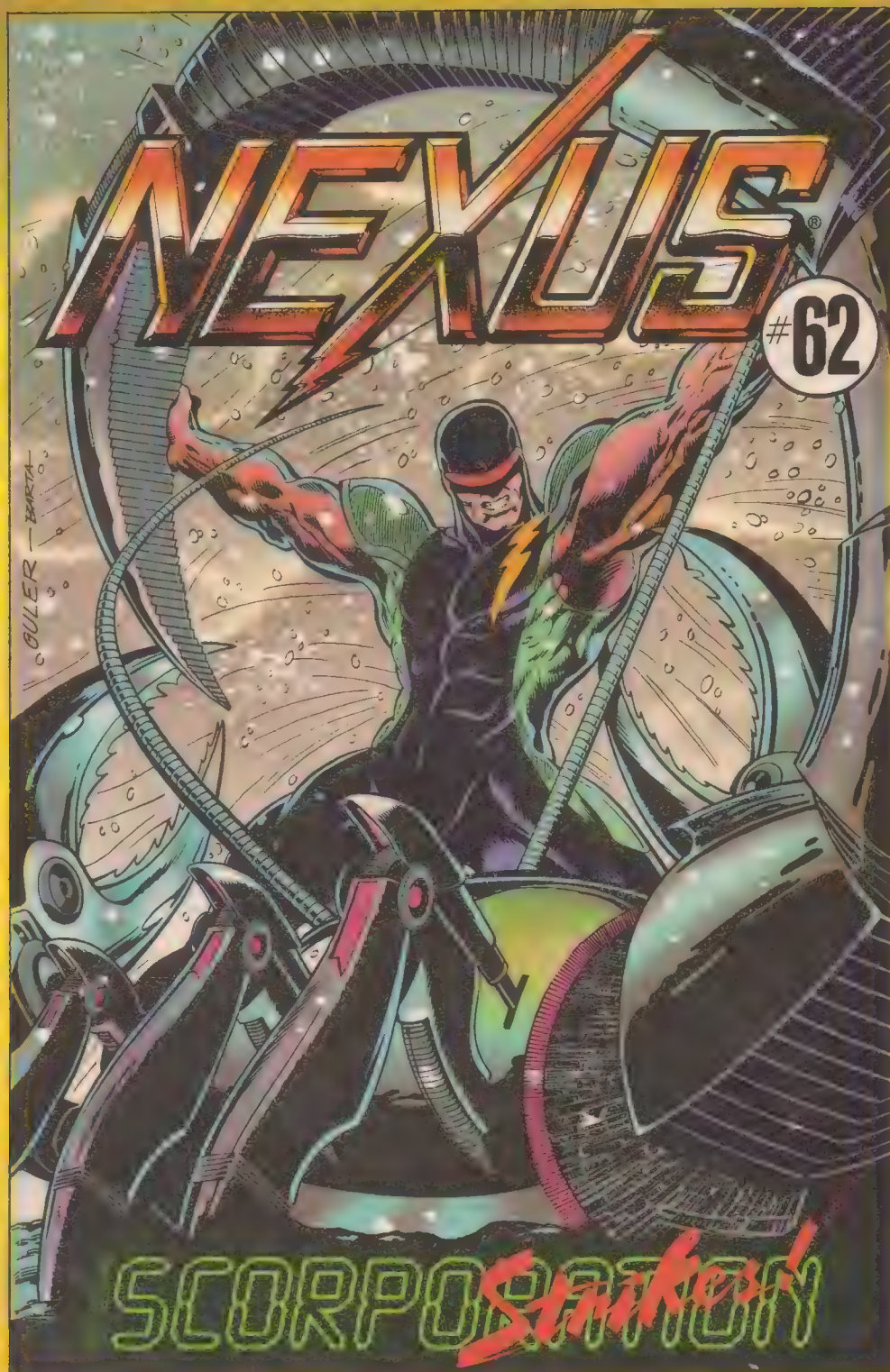


PEST CO



CRAWLING YOUR WA

CONTROL!!!



Y IN JULY FROM **FIRST**
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VIVA BOLIVAR!

SILLY GRINGO...
YOU CAN NOT
HURT ME...



HEY, TROOPS,
WHAT'S WITH THIS
GUY?...

THE
INDIANS SAY
HE IS POSSESSED...
THAT THERE IS
NOTHING TO DO BUT
DIE BRAVELY.

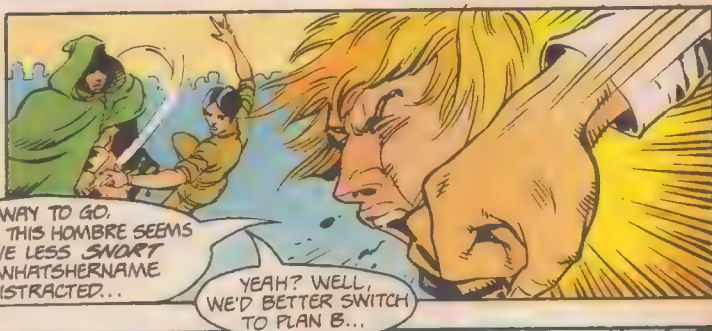
THEY ARE
EXCITED ABOUT A
GOOD CROP YEAR...



WELL, MR. MAYOR,
YOU TELL THAT WITCH-
BITCH SOMETHING
FOR ME...



SHE AND HER CROPS
CAN GO TO HELL!

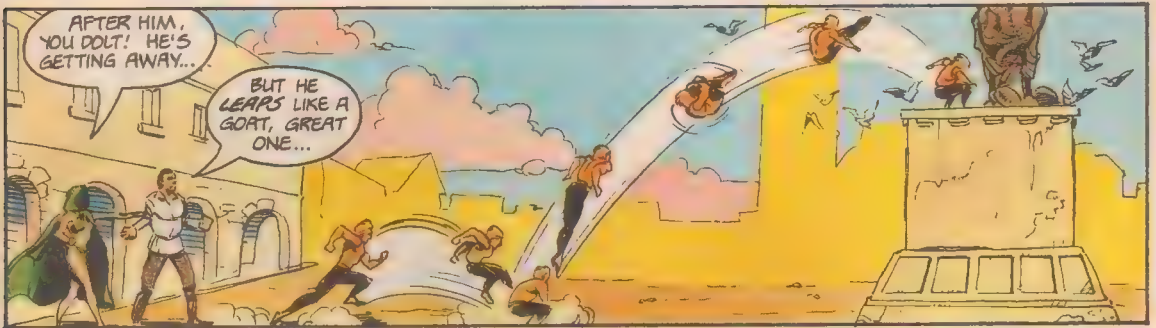
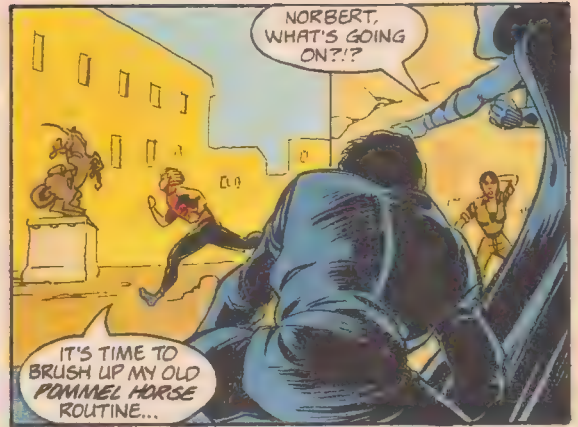
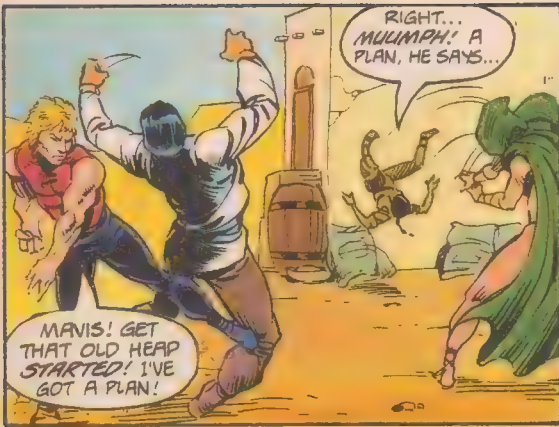


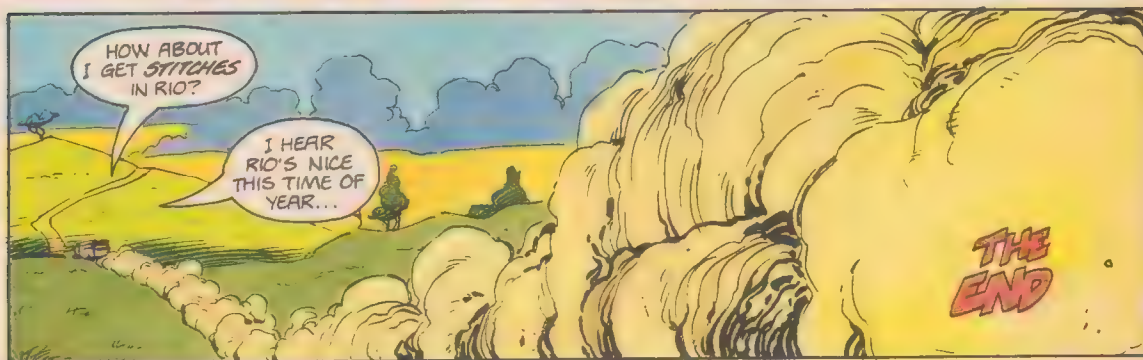
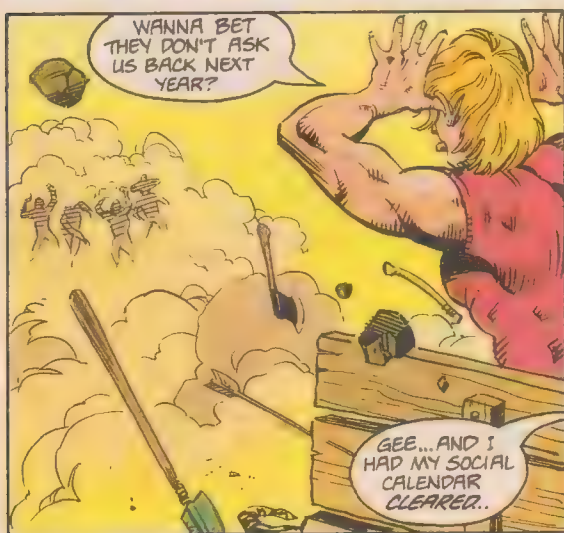
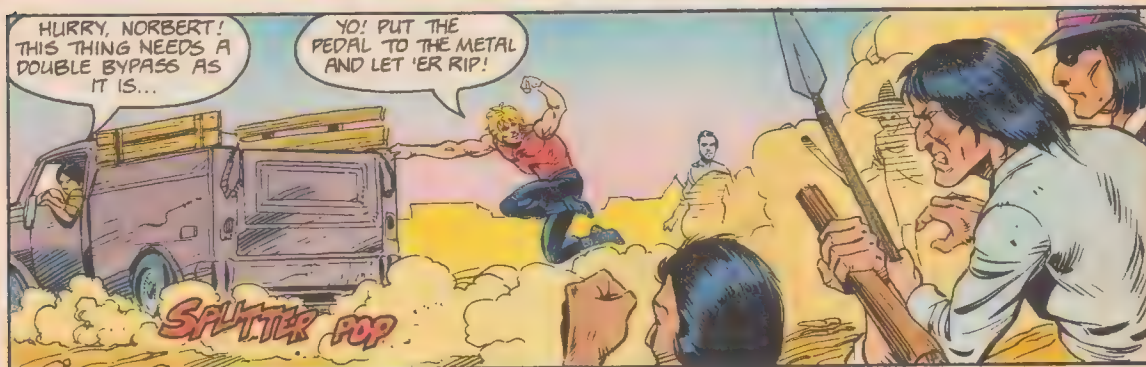
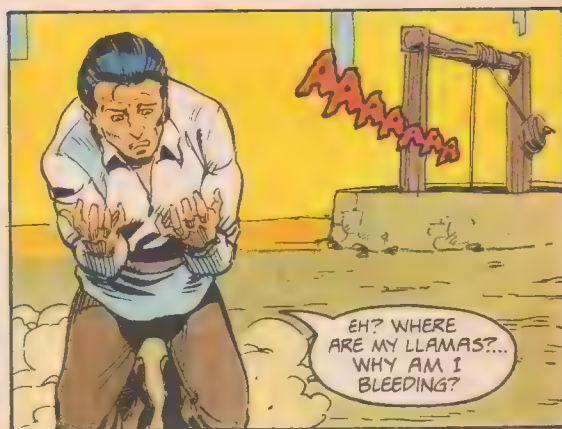
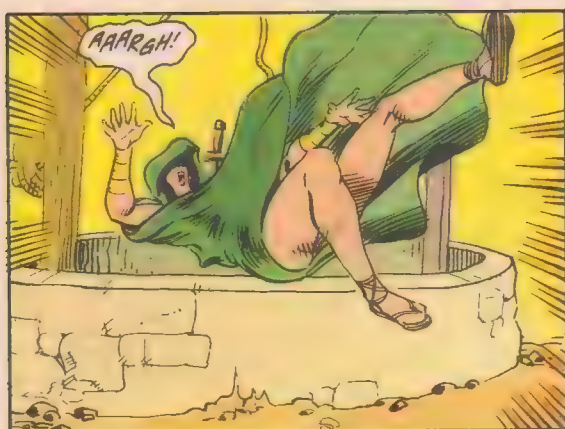
WAY TO GO,
MAVIS! THIS HOMBRE SEEMS
TO HAVE LESS SWEET
WHEN WHATSHERNAME
IS DISTRACTED...

YEAH? WELL,
WE'D BETTER SWITCH
TO PLAN B...



...BECAUSE
THE NATIVES DON'T
LIKE US FOOLING WITH
MOTHER NATURE
HERE...





Mike Baron the Man in the Grey Silk Suit



"Let me tell you something, my good fellow. The university is a sinkhole of corruption and petty bickering. It's a thousand times worse than any Republican administration, I assure you," said the man in the grey silk suit as he took another sip of his vodka gimlet, sneered, and stared at the bartender without focusing.

The bartender was getting ticked off. Ask a civil question about the University of Wisconsin's Badgers and listen to the guy. The Rock Quarry bar in rural Wisconsin, wasn't the place for either vodka gimlets or the man with his French-cut grey silk suit, elaborate pompadour, pink shirt with grey mother of pearl buttons, and shiny black leather Italian shoes with little leather tassels. The bartender figured him for a poof.

Ever since the man sauntered into the bar that morning, ordered a vodka gimlet, and then proceeded to explain to him how it was made, the bartender was sure he was a poof.

Not only an obvious poof, but one who didn't like the way he made drinks, and criticized in a funny accent. The bartender hoped Jase Morgan and the boys would find time this fine April morning to stop into the old Rock Quarry bar, because they sure-god-hated poofs and it might be worth it, even if they did break up the place, to watch them beat the hell out of this guy.

The bartender moved his heavy bulk around the bar, through the dark tavern, kicking up some of the dust that covered the floor, the tables, and the softball team photos. He went to the Wurlitzer, resplendent in neon and turquoise piping.

"Say fella, you don't mind a little music do you? It always gets me going in the morning," he said placing quarters in the machine without waiting for a reply.

The man popped out of his haze. "Sir, I'm a music lover. How about some Vivaldi? No, I suppose not. Any Sinatra, then? Streisand and the Beatles might be acceptable."

"I was thinking more in line of Charlie Daniels. That set all right with you?" the bartender asked, punching buttons.

The man sneered again, and the bartender started to pray that Jase and the boys would come for that early drink. A team of miniature Clydsdales circled in perpetual motion next to the clock on which the Hamm's bear lolled before an improbably blue electric waterfall which told the bartender it was ten o'clock. It was early for the boys, but still, they'd come by before at this time. He returned to the bar, and started cleaning glasses.

"You mind me askin' you something?" The bartender moved close to the lean man in the grey silk suit. This guy was wearing cologne like an old whore. The bartender wanted to smash him in the face.

"How'd you find yourself in Rock Quarry? I didn't hear a car when you came in. Did someone drop you off? You lost? You run away from the nut house, maybe?"

The poof leaned in to take the bartender into his confidence. "You know, that's the strangest thing, I don't have the slightest idea what I'm doing here or how I got here," he said before hoisting his gimlet and sucking it dry. "My most recent memory is of standing at the edge of the woods across the county trunk, and watching you unlock the front door of this fine establishment."

Motioning for another drink, the man continued. "It seemed only logical for me to follow. And then the muse bade me order a vodka gimlet and I had the pleasure of instructing you in the construction of that outstanding libation."

"The muse bade you enter..." Then the bartender cocked his head. He heard a faint growl in the distance, like a hysterical jungle beast. Was it possible there was a God in heaven? Could it be his prayers had been answered?

The poof was now going on about the opera, as if he weren't asking to be punched in the mouth, for chrissakes.

The roaring faded and waxed, as it followed some twisting path that would eventually bring it directly past the Rock Quarry. Now, the roar was the sound of a powerful engine, accompanied by the piercing shriek of low-profile racing tires. It climaxed in the parking lot with an explosion of shrieking engine, squealing tires, and clouds of dust.

"Good heavens," the poof exclaimed.

"Haven't those people ever heard of replacement mufflers? Back to the opera -- and when I say opera, I wish to differentiate between that and what I call 'light opera,' do you follow me?"

The bartender cocked his head toward the parking lot where the car doors slammed. The sounds of "mutha," and "your mama" could clearly be heard coming across the gravel lot.

The bartender turned back to the poof.

"Oh yes, mm-hmm. What was that about the opera?"

The front door banged open and three men entered, raising dust and kicking at chairs. All three appeared to be in their mid to late twenties. The leader, a young man with black wavy hair held in place by a red bandanna, straddled a bar stool, two seats down from the man in the grey suit. "Hey, Ollie!" he shouted. "Give us some brews!"

"Sure, Jase. Right away," the bartender shouted back.

They came in three sizes, squat, medium and tall. All three wore torn Levis, black leather boots, and t-shirts. The man in the bandanna wore a black leather jacket covered with zippers. His t-shirt said, "Death From Above -- 816th Airborne" and showed a death's head over two crossed F-14s.

The stocky skinhead went over to the jukebox and jammed it with his hand causing Charlie Daniels to skip.

"Hey, Stew," the bartender protested. "Don't do that! That there's a classic! If you want to put something else on, you know where the cancel button is."

The skinhead turned, displaying a Polson t-shirt and a gap-toothed grin. "Y'know, Ollie, only reason I slap this juke is 'cause it's

better 'n slappin' you."

The bartender grinned weakly and hurried to draw the boys some beers. The third dark-haired kid, took the seat next to the poof. The bartender watched with barely suppressed glee. All the poof had to do was open his mouth and he was a dead man -- and the boys would get it out of their systems. Ollie figured they'd been out trapping -- chump change to a high-roller like Jase, but it was illegal and allowed him to inflict pain, so it would do, during the off-season.

The music stopped. The skinhead pondered the menu, and then made his selection. The dulcet strains of Motley Crue split the air like a buzzsaw. The tall guy was boppin' all over his chair, bumping into the poof, trying to get a reaction. The bartender gestured at the poof's drink. He nodded and tipped his glass toward the bartender, then turned to the others and announced to no one in particular, "What god-awful noise. Sounds like two cats with their tails tied together."

All eyes swivelled to him. The guy on the next stool, who looked like Ric Ocasek and wore studded leather wrist bands, said very softly, "What did you say?"

The poof raised the gimlet to his nose and sniffed. "You're getting better," he told the bartender, who almost felt sorry for the guy. After all, he did teach him how to make a gimlet.

The poof sipped, smiled, turned to the tall man. "I said, you rank lobster, that music sounds like jackals in heat and you smell like them."

"Yeah," the tall man said, "that's what I thought you said." He flicked his left arm in an arc, whacking the poof across the forehead. Blood streamed as if faucets had been opened. The tall man dug his fist into the French cut suit. The poof went down.

"Way to go, Gary," Jase called, turning on his stool to watch. "Show the man what good taste is all about."

Gary toed the hapless poof, seemed to turn away, then came back with a sharp kick to the kidneys. "Yeah, man. Maybe you'd better learn to mind your own business."

The bartender leaned across the bar and touched Gary on the shoulder. "Hey, that's enough. Let 'im go -- he don't know what he's doing here anyway." The man in the suit began to crawl across the floor toward the men's room leaving a trail in the dust. The bartender hoped he hadn't been seriously hurt -- that he wouldn't bleed to death in the

restroom or otherwise cause an unpleasant encounter with the authorities.

Jase lashed out from his stool when the poof passed close, sending him sprawling. The three traveling companions laughed hysterically.

"Hey, Jase," the skinhead shouted, spraying phlegm on the man in the suit. He jammed his heel into the man's back flattening him again. The man kept his back down and slithered into the men's room. "Let's show Ollie that varmint we caught!"

Jase curled his lip in contempt. "What do you mean 'we,' numbnuts? I was the one set the trap!"

Gary turned from his perch. "Go on — show Ollie the varmint — maybe he'll know what it is."

The bartender refilled their beers. "You caught some kind of varmint, you don't know what it is?"

Stew went to the bar, picked up his beer, drained it in a single chug, and slammed the empty glass on the counter. "There's some money in furs if you know the right people. So many goody-goody bleeding heart watchdog groups on your ass, it's hardly worth the trouble."

"What about this thing?" the bartender asked. "Where is it?"

Jase winked at Gary. "Bring it here."

"Wait a minute," the bartender said. "What if it's dangerous?"

Jase turned the lip on him. "You big pansy! Pull out that twelve-gauge shotgun you got behind the bar if you're so scared of a little critter!"

The bartender still hoped to stave off possible disaster. "What type of animal is it? Do you know that much?"

Gary went out of the door. Jase turned around to address his beer. "Well, it's kind of like a fox — a big, silver, ring-tailed fox. Only ain't no such animal hereabouts."

"Here she comes!" Stew sang, rattling his glass on the bar and looking at the door. Gary entered carrying a wooden crate with a hinged wire lid. The crate was about two and a half feet wide by two feet deep, and gyrated in Gary's hands.

From inside came a series of high-pitched squeals. Gary set the crate on the floor several feet in front of the bar. The bartender came from behind to see. They all knelt over the crate through which tufts of silver fur

darted, sharp claws clicking on the metal lid. "Be careful," Gary warned. "Bugger's got sharp little teeth..."

The bartender thought that the creature did indeed resemble a fox except the head was shorter and more blunt, and the tail was unusually luxurious, ringed as brightly as Saturn. It was a foot and a half long in body, and scrambled frantically from one end of its tiny prison to the other, snapping its jaws. He was fascinated.

Jase gripped his arm. "Look at them little fangs! Betcha he could take a man's hand off

with one bite. What do you think, Ollie hey?"

Jase surreptitiously unfastened the lid, and threw it open, shouting, "Look out! It's loose! It's loose!"

The results were extremely gratifying. The

bartender shrieked like a stuck pig and reared back, losing his balance and upsetting a table, sending the ashtray, condiments, and an amber glass globe smashing to the floor. Stew doubled over with laughter, snorting like a stuck valve. Gary watched with interest from the bar stool, slamming down Johnny Walker Blacks which he appropriated from Ollie's special stock below the bar. The silver creature dashed madly about the room, snapping its jaws. The bartender scrambled on top of the bar, half-weeping in fear and frustration. "Stop it! Catch it! Stop it!"

Jase dipped behind the bar and emerged with Ollie's sawed-off shotgun. Pointing the muzzle at the ceiling he pumped a shell into the chamber and drew bead on the silvery creature as it scurried toward the front door. "Okay, Ollie. If you say so!"

The shotgun exploded once, twice, and all were afflicted with deafening silence. Smoke hang heavy in the room. The creature had been blasted in half, its entrails glowing purplish in the neon light. Blood spread across the floor. There was a lot of blood for such a small creature.

Stew whooped like an Indian. "Goddam! Nice shot, Jase! You done blasted it, whatever it was!"

"It was a wiesbladen," said the man in the suit. Except, as he stood in the restroom doorway, he was no longer wearing the suit. He'd removed the jacket and shirt, and was clad only in a white muscle shirt splattered

**"I said, you rank
lobster, that the
music sounds like
jackals in heat and
you smell like them."**

with blood, and grey silk slacks. He still wore his shiny black shoes. Blood from his scalp had streamed down in broad stripes from his forehead to the inner corners of his eyes, and he had smeared blood on his cheeks in broad vertical stripes like warpaint. The bartender realized for the first time, that this man might really have some mental problems.

The three trappers were nonplussed. "A what?" Stew asked.

"A wiesbladen," the man replied. "An extremely rare member of the fox family thought to have died out a hundred years ago. But we get sightings from time to time. And there it is -- the only known wiesbladen in existence, and you've killed it."

Jase grinned, hefting the shotgun. "We're just nature-lovin' kind of guys."

The man stooped, grabbed a wooden kitchen chair from a nearby table and whirled it in an arc behind him. The three trappers were so absorbed in his performance they didn't realize until it was too late that he was hurling the chair straight at Jason, who was shouting, while bringing up the shotgun. He was too slow -- the chair struck the tip of the barrel, driving it toward the ceiling. The shotgun boomed and plaster rained down. Snarling, Jase scanned the room for the stranger, but the man was gone -- he had tumbled out of sight as he'd released the chair.

"Okay," Jase said. "He's in here somewhere -- look down behind all the tables -- Stew -- check those booths over there. Gary, look behind the bar."

Gary went around the far side of the bar, twenty feet from where the stranger had disappeared. The upper half of Gary's body jolted violently as if seized below by a great white. He grunted twice, his eyes going wide. He went down.

The bartender was still on top of the bar, but retreated to the far end, near the men's room. Jase looked at him. "He's back there, isn't he? Isn't he, you old fart?" The bartender remained rigid, whining through his teeth. Jase lunged to the bar, jammed the shotgun over and fired twice. Someone groaned.

"Stew," Jase hissed and gestured frantically across the room. "He's behind the bar. Get your butt over here!"

Stew approached cautiously, and then peered over the top of the bar. "I think you shot Gary, man."

"Stupid bastard -- he should have seen the guy!" Jase turned the shotgun on the bartender who was about to disappear into the men's room. "You freeze your ass, sucker! You're in this too-- it's your shotgun, man --

you'd better help us nail this guy or we're gonna hang your ass out to dry."

Suddenly a form rose up from behind the bar and lunged at Jase spewing blood. With a shriek, Jase swung the shotgun around and caught the man full in the chest, knocking him over.

"It's Gary!" Stew bellowed, whirling frantically. The bartender disappeared into the men's room.

A low chanting emerged from behind the bar. "Kenneth -- what is the frequency? Kenneth -- what is the frequency? Tear the roof off the sucker, tear the roof off the sucker..."

Jase drew bead on the source of the chanting -- it came from beneath the bar. He pulled the trigger and the firing pin clicked against an empty chamber. The man with the warpaint popped up grinning from behind the bar.

"Hi there, campers! Time to play Uncle Badger's thumpa-thumpa game!" The man vaulted the bar and came at Jase in a series of short, shuffling steps. Jase swung the shotgun like a baton but somehow, the crazy man had moved inside his grip and thrown his arm over, around, and under Jase's arm. The man swivelled abruptly, dipped and hoisted. Jase's right arm popped out of the shoulder socket. Jase screamed and fell to his knees, cradling his useless right arm with his left.

Stew whipped out a balisong he'd bought through the mail for thirty-five dollars. Singing "Tears of a Clown," the crazy man grabbed a wooden bar chair and swung it underhand toward the surprised Stew, who involuntarily lurched to one side, smack into a roundhouse kick. When the crazy man stretched out his shiny black shoes, he had an eight foot reach. The kick dislodged a tooth the hapless Stew could ill-afford to lose. The crazy man shuffled like a broken robot, all electric jitter. Stew swung the balisong frantically in an arc before him to ward off any blow.

"A wiesbladen," the stranger chanted as if by rote. He fainted to the right and Stew moved with him. "This rare North American member of the lupus oopus doopus is noted for its bright notations and millions in Swiss bank accounts."

The Badger lashed out with an inside arcing kick that caught Stew's knife hand painfully on the thumb. The balisong clattered to the floor. "Each wiesbladen has memorized his, her, or its own secret Swiss account number," he recited.

"And you, you dumb son of a bitch," he yelled, shuffling in and delivering two short

chopping ridge hands to Stew's stump-like neck, "you killed it!"

Stew fell like a pole-axed steer. There was a groan from the floor right in front of the bar. "Hear that?" the crazy man said. "Pal Gary's hanging on by a thread, no thanks to you. I'll send an ambulance if I remember. Cough up the keys, pal."

"Huh?" Stew asked, befuddled.

The man wriggled his fingers under Stew's nose. "The keys, dumbkoff. To the car!"

Stew indicated Jase, who writhed on the floor. "It's his — he's got the keys." The crazy man stooped, reached into the pocket of Jase's black leather jacket and removed a leather fob. Jase gritted his teeth.

"Not my wheels, man — that's a '65 Goat convertible, mannn... that's all I got in the world!"

The crazy man nudged Jase in the shoulder. Jase screamed. "This little piggy's only got three things in the whole world," the man sang with an exaggerated prairie twang: "His mammy, you, and teraminin little piggie formula! You think about that, next time you

go trapping, hear?"

He strode out of the bar. Seconds later, those who remained conscious could hear the triple-carbureted Pontiac 389 roaring to life. A clatter of gravel struck the front of the bar as the Goat peeled out. They could hear its engine receding in the distance until finally, just before it disappeared, it resembled the roar of a jungle beast.

The room was made of Welsh granite and had a vaulted ceiling fifteen feet high. Gargoyles looked down from the casings. A narrow window looked out on the Wisconsin countryside. One wall was given over to cages — hamsters, kittens, cockatiels, and rabbits, which provided an aural backdrop of chittering and thumps. The wizard, Ham, stood before his menagerie, sadly shaking his head. There wasn't a single animal that would be of the slightest use. He sighed with impatience, waving a butcher knife. Nothing here would aid his portfolio. He was stuck until the Badger returned with a suitable sacrifice.



The wizard stood five feet four and weighed 200 lbs, very little of it fat. He had a broad bald head that appeared suitable for icebreaker duty in the North Atlantic. Bushy black eyebrows hooded his deep-set blue eyes; a neat vandyke circled a slash of a mouth giving an incongruous continental air. He wore a burlap robe with a peaked hood that covered his head.

"Ach, krethyllrychiky, m'mmack!" he cried in frustration, whirling on the heavily stained stone pedestal that occupied the center of the room. "Kreyrllscarney!" He brought the butcher knife down on the stone with enough force to cause sparks. At that moment he heard a faint roaring noise, followed by the slamming of a car door, and then the castle's front door.

Moments later, the heavy wooden door to the chamber burst inward and smashed against the wall. The Badger stood there grinning like an idiot, face and chest smeared with blood, wearing the remains of his once expensive French silk suit. He jangled car keys high in the air. "I have found it!" he shrieked.

"You have found what, sir?" the wizard demanded. "What have you done to your suit? Where is the wiesbladen? Do you have any idea what I've been going through, waiting? Do you follow the market in the slightest? Are you ignorant of the functions of the telephone?"

The Badger tossed the car keys on the pedestal. "Sorry, no wiesbladen. The grinks and the groinks got to it first."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I said, Larry, the grinks and groinks caught the only known wiesbladen in southwestern Wisconsin and assassinated same with no higher goal in mind than to see the creature blow apart."

Stepping back as if struck, Ham stammered, "No, no — it can't be true!" Yet he knew it was. When he consulted the Astounding Rotundity as to the creature's existence an hour ago, the globe had remained opaque. It was the Astounding Rotundity which had alerted him to the wiesbladen's existence in the first place. The silvery mammal had excited numerous possibilities, not the least of which was a six month jump on next year's commodities market. The wizard divined the future through the sacrifice of rare animals — the more rare, the better. To have laid knife to the last example of a species was the mystic equivalent of winning the Lotto jackpot.

But missing the wiesbladen! Well, he was used to it. He'd known what kind of man the Badger was when they'd been simultaneously released from Nakoma State Mental hospital.

"What I don't understand," he said, "is how can you set forth on Tuesday in a jeep, wearing commando fatigues, and return on Friday, in somebody else's car and torn silk pants."

The Badger hurled himself at the floor and sprung to his feet like some demented spring toy. "It's simple, Larry. I always keep the suit in the jeep, just in case. I was listening to the radio, and they began to play Mozart. Do you think the Badger likes Amadeus? No, he does not... but Max Swell does. Max took the wheel, but when he gazed in the mirror, he was seized with horror, Larry. Absolute horror!"

"Max would never wear commando fatigues," Badger said grinning. "So Max pulled a pit stop, changed into the suit and emerged to confront the jeep. Well, he wouldn't be caught dead driving a mud-spattered jeep. He abandoned it then and there. I don't know what happened next, you'll have to ask Max. But here I am, safe and sound, although Max will be mad as hell when he sees his suit, and I've brought you the sacrifice of a lifetime, so what are you bitching about?"

"What are you talking about?" the wizard demanded. Badger made little sense, but great promises.

Badger nudged the keys on the pedestal. "Out front— a perfectly preserved '65 Pontiac GTO with a triple Weber 389. The last one in the state, if not the country."

The wizard's eyebrows twisted like humping worms. "HMMMMM?"

"That's right, Larry! It's a one-of-a-kind classic! Sure, they made thousands of the suckers, but how many are left and being driven daily? One, bubba. And you can have it."

"Are you suggesting I sacrifice a car? An inanimate object?"

"Why not? It's a rare beast, and it's been used to transport lots of rare beasts such as the wiesbladen. Undoubtedly some of their blood, sweat, and tears must have soaked into the upholstery or the trunk, and that's good for the prognostication business. Correct me if I'm wrong."

The wizard regarded the Badger with approval. "Let's take a look at this rare vehicle."

Some time later, they drove the car to the rim of a nearby quarry, set it afire, and pushed it in.

Sometime later, the wizard made a killing on soybean futures.

FINI

Dear LARRY,:

C/O FIRST COMICS
435 N. LASALLE
CHICAGO IL
60610

Before this letter column gets going, I just wanted to thank Ron Lim for the terrific job he did on his run on the Badger. Vaya con Dios, Ron!

Mike,
"Aww heck, Don?"
Sheesh.

P.S. Great to see Butler back — and I'm looking forward to Vigil and the crew on the Berserk mini-series! Yow!

Ken Meyer, Jr.
3225 So. Pecos
Las Vegas, NV 89121

As you now know, Tim Vigil is doing the regular book for the next couple of issues, and Tim's just warming up. But sad to say, he's not part of the jam issues.

Dear Larry, Mike, Ron, Al, Larry, Jeffrey, Paul, Larry and Elvis;

I never thought I'd be writing to a magazine like this and I always thought your letters were fakes until I had this incredible experience last weekend that might interest your readers. A beautiful, blonde, female teenager came to my dormitory room last night (*We had to do some heavy editing here—Bob*), I decided...

Wait.

Oh, hey, skip the first part of this letter. I've been awake 123 hours and completely forgot I was writing a letter to the *Badger*, and not *Penthouse Forum*. Heh, heh. Let's just keep this our little secret, and I'll give all of you five dollars. (*Thanks for the five dollars, but since banks hold out-of-town checks for two weeks... we'll be printing this letter for only fourteen days.*)

Anyway...

I got issue #49 and the big, expensive 50th issue at the same time because my local retailer neglected to put some of the newer issues where I could find them. (*Ach! Those pesky retailers.*) I was happy to read them both together because I didn't have to wait months to find out how the "tear off the roof" story would end.

"We Have Always Lived In the Castle" is a reference to a Shirley Jackson novel, so I get three points for spotting that one. (*What? We're giving out points now? No one told me. What does he get, for how many points?*) I also noticed that *Badger* is wearing his hair like Don Johnson but I claim no score for that observation.

The Frank Lloyd Wrong two-parter was funny, yet it made me wonder why Mavis Davis Sykes prefers to humor Norbert's insanity when she

could easily make better use of her time suing for community property or pressing... (*More editing was needed in order to sell this book to minors.*)

The "Anemone of the People" story was much better, combining all the elements of *Badger* that has made the series a classic; bikinis, violence, supernatural weirdness, great art, Ham being a manipulative sleaze and Mike's screwy writing (*Mike'll like that*). If the story had featured dead movie stars and Lone Star beer it would have been the best overpriced comic since the last Superman movie adaptation. (*Overpriced? Overpriced? We work our fingers to the bone. Late hours. Little sleep. Too much Coca-Cola. All to bring you a spiffy fun-to-read, pretty-to-look-at Badger extravaganza.*)

Do you think all that care and loving attention comes cheap? No way buster...

Excuse me, I always get this way when someone compares one of our books to a SUPERMAN MOVIE ADAPTATION! I'm sending the five dollars back, and you lose your points.)

What's the deal about a *Badger* mini-series that examines the roots of his madness? This is *Badger*, dammit, not the Joker or

"This is Badger, dammit, not the Joker or Wolverine or Batman or the Punisher or any of the other overly-publicized psychotics that haunt comic book pages like jeering, four-color poltergeists."

Wolverine or Batman or the Punisher or any of the other overly-publicized psychotics that haunt comic book pages like jeering, four-color poltergeists. (Not overly-publicized? We're in trouble.)

I know that Badger is crazy and I like the characterization that presents him as a functional psychotic with a sense of humor. In fact, it is his sense of humor that separates him from the rest of the "please pity me" boys currently featured in comics. I'd hate to see Norbert become too serious. It would ruin his appeal.

Happy 50th!!! I'll be reading the Badger as long as Mike writes it. *(Roger Sallick's not going to like that. But then again you won't know, because you won't be buying this issue. Hmmm, and I wasted all these italics, too.)*

T.E Pouncey
Slouching toward
Bethlehem but living in
Witchita, KS 67208

I don't think there's any chance of the Badger becoming too serious. But there has always been an edge to this series. If taken at face value, this book would be very shocking in its content and subject matter.

However, since it's colored by Badger's perception of reality, the impact is much less than it would be in

another comic.

But whoa! This is way too serious a subject for this letter column. Grab the **Badger Goes Berserk** miniseries. You won't be disappointed.

Hey Bob,

Re: Badger #50.

Uf-Da

You guys sure do throw one helluva party.

But I refuse to believe that one of Norbert's other six personalities is gay.

Pass me a copy of **Grimjack**.

Uncle Elvis

17650 Dawson Rd.

Dawson Springs, KY 42408

Well, he is. Just deal with it.

Larry,

Any truth to the rumor that Lewis Milestone's 1952 classic, *Les Miserables* is going to be released on videocassette?

T.E. LeMachaus

4 Aborn Place #2

Peabody, MA 01960-6101

I love this letter column.

Well, I've been way too self-indulgent for one letter column. I better get back to work. See ya' next issue.

—Bob Garcia



Next Issue: Ham gets a girlfriend. But is she who she seems? Get "Behind the Black Door," by Roger Salick, Tim Vigil and Denis Rodler.



In **Badger Goes Berserk #2:** Badger escaped the All-White Brotherhood, but can't escape his past. By Mike Baron and Paul Chadwick, Denys Cowan, Mitch O'Connell, Jay Geldhof, Spyder, John K. Snyder III and Mike Zeck.

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